

<sup>1</sup> David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Chicago: Gateway Editions, Inc., 1956), Sect. II, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Everyman's Library No. 548, ed. Ernest Rhys (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1939), Vol. I, p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 238.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 239-240.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> William Knight, *Hume* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1886), p. 131.

<sup>10</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), Bk. I, Pt. I, Sect. VI.

<sup>11</sup> David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. Henry D. Aiken (New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1957), Pt. XII, p. 94.

<sup>12</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentaria in Methaphysicam Aristotelis* (Taurini: Marietti, 1926), Bk. XII, lect. 12, No. 2663.

## THE LOVE OF GOD

Humility, the general attitude of complete submissiveness before God, arises from self-knowledge. St. Bernard had in fact defined humility in these terms a century before St. Thomas. [Humility is that virtue by which a man estimates himself as insignificant as a result of a truly accurate knowledge of himself.] . . . If the knowledge of God and of ourselves given us by revelation, instead of remaining theoretical and sterile, truly determined our actions and outlook on life we could not fail to be humble. It has been pointed out that humility is a specifically Christian virtue, of which the pagans seem to have had little idea. For them "humble" . . . was synonymous with "low," "vile," "abject," "servile," and "ignoble." The revealed dogmas of creation *ex nihilo* and of the necessity of divine grace for every salutary act provide, so to say, the ontological foundations for humility. That we were produced from nothing by God; that He preserves us at every moment, by His positive act of conservation, from falling back into the original nothingness from which we came; that further we cannot make the slightest movements toward our salvation without His efficacious help are facts so all-embracing in their significance as not to fall within the category of any virtue. These are the truths which dominate the *Summa*

*Theologica*; so that Thomism—whatever may be said of the shortcomings of the Thomists—might fairly be described as the theology of humility.

There are, moreover, certain advantages in setting humility in its wider context and then considering it in particular as a function of temperance. It is obvious enough that the virtue cannot be acquired without some measure of personal realization of our comparative insignificance in the whole scheme of things. There result from this knowledge the sense of balance and proportion, good humour, an absence of fussiness and self-importance which are often surer signs of genuine humility than downcast eyes and studious self-effacement. The humble man will unconsciously reveal the virtue in his actions, but as an effect of an inner conviction, not of seeking after the appropriate attitude. In this connection it seems possible that to approach humility, convinced of its absolute necessity and yet without insight into its relation to the theological virtues, is to run the risk of a certain unreality and pharisaism in the spiritual life. Indulgence in elaborate depreciation of self and all forms of mock-modesty merely bring discredit on the virtue they counterfeit; and yet such pitfalls are not always avoided even by those whose intentions are of the best. It is worth recalling that St. Thomas had no difficulty in reconciling magnanimity, the desire to do great deeds which does not exclude the public recognition of them, with the possession of humility. "Humility restrains the appetite from aiming at great things against right reason: while magnanimity urges the mind to great things against right reason: while magnanimity urges the mind to great opposed to humility, indeed they concur in this, that each is according to right reason."

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